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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001321

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: SHAN LEADERS TRANSFERRED TO NORTHERN PRISONS

REF: A. RANGOON 1264  
    B. RANGOON 332  
    C. RANGOON 185

Classified By: Poloff Dean Tidwell for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

**¶1.** (U) Summary: Embassy sources report that GOB authorities recently transferred Shan leaders, including ethnic pro-democracy leader Hkun Htun Oo, from Insein Prison in Rangoon to remote detention facilities in northern Burma. This will make it more difficult for family members to offer them vital supplies and will complicate their appeals process. End Summary.

**¶2.** (C) Family members and ethnic politicians reported to Emboffs on November 21 that in recent days the GOB had transferred several political prisoners, all ethnic Shan leaders, from Rangoon's Insein Prison to prisons in northern Burma. Among those we understand are relocated are pro-democracy leaders Hkun Htun Oo, Chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), and Sai Nyunt Lwin, SNLD Secretary. Authorities also transferred General Hso Ten, Chairman of the Shan State Army-North.

**¶3.** (C) Families members only found out about the transfers when they went to Insein Prison on a regular food delivery and were informed that their relatives were no longer there. Prison authorities refused to indicate where the prisoners were transferred. The three Shan leaders were arrested in February (ref C) and sentenced in November to multiple life sentences (ref A).

**¶4.** (C) Embassy sources claim that authorities may have transferred the Shan leaders to Mandalay Prison and/or to Kalemyo Prison, in remote Sagaing Division near the border with India. Kalemyo Prison is notorious for its difficult conditions. It has housed political prisoners before, often in solitary confinement. U Tin Oo, Vice Chairman of the National League for Democracy (NLD), was imprisoned in Kalemyo after the May 2003 Depeyin attack and prior to his transfer to Rangoon, where he remains under house arrest.

**¶5.** (U) Comment: Moving these political prisoners to upcountry locations will make their lives much more uncomfortable. It is customary in Burma for families to bring food, medicine, and clothing to their incarcerated loved ones to supplement the meager prison supplies. The relocation will make intermittent family visits more difficult and will significantly encumber communications between the prisoners and their lawyers in Rangoon, who are attempting to file appeals. End Comment.

VILLAROSA